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Teaching As An Artistic Practice

Henry Ward

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY BY PUBLIC WORKS

Middlesex University

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CONTEXTUAL STATEMENT – Henry Ward

- 1 I am presenting a collection of 3 volumes, and a folio containing the first five issues of *Æ* (The Arts and Education periodical I founded in 2011). The volumes cover elements of my practice. The intention is to present the audience with an overview of my work over the last thirteen years and to provide the content to enable a contextual understanding of my work in relation to the notion of ‘Teaching as an Artistic Practice’. The volumes are: Collected Writings 2000-2013; Selected Projects 2002-2013; 3 Essays - Art as a Vehicle for Cross-curricular Practice; The School as a Gallery; Vito & Me – A Collaboration with Harold Offeh and the Tate Modern.**

In presenting a cross-section of the work I have been engaged with for the last thirteen years, I intend to demonstrate how my work has developed into teaching as a form of contemporary art practice. Contemporary as socially responsible, collaborative, multi-disciplinary and multi-thematic. Any teacher who is concerned with relevance must tackle the contemporary. This is an account of my practice and an attempt to understand it. The exemplification of many of the claims made in this statement are to be found in the accompanying volumes.

These are the evidence of my practice as an artist.

2. MY PRACTICE

I am a teacher. I am an artist.

It is after school. Some twelve -year old students have come back to a classroom to work on the project they are involved in doing; they are creating a photographic version of a painting by Vermeer. I help them set up the tripod and camera, get out some lights and leave them to it. I have a meeting in the room next door. An hour or so later I return to a heated argument. The students are fiercely discussing their different opinions about exactly what direction the light in the painting is coming from.

The lower sixth are doing a project on 'Identity'. One student has embarked on a rather ambitious self-portrait, constructed from fingerprints, carefully placed in a grid of 10,000 squares. By the deadline he has managed only the first dozen lines or so, but the quality of the work is already evident. His dad arrives at school in a van to take the incomplete work home. Almost a year later the van arrives back in the school car park and the now completed painting, re-appears. It is a breath-taking accomplishment. The student has been working on it in his family's garage almost every evening since.

A year ten GCSE class: A student has borrowed a video camera and gone off to a local park to make a film about an accident he suffered as a toddler. He has taken with him a roll of hazard tape and plans to tape up the swings that he fell from. A short while later, he comes back into the classroom, having completed his filming, and places a screwed up roll of tape on the plinth in the middle of the room. "There you are sir. It's a sculpture now."

I've turned my classroom into a warren of cardboard studios, dividing all my classes into groups or individuals and providing them with private working spaces. I am teaching a group of sixth formers. Each of them has been given a secret identity to assume. It is designed to take them out of their comfort zones. One particularly articulate student has been instructed to 'make stuff' and 'stop having ideas'. She has been to visit her granny to learn how to crochet. Now she sits in her 'studio,' making things. But she can't stop herself having an idea. She decides to try and understand how she 'learnt' to crochet and how she might teach it. The resulting work is a triptych of videos; her granny's hands in the act of crocheting, her own

hands doing the same, and, finally, the hands of her 14 year-old brother: A visual translation of the act of passing on a skill.

Another sixth-form lesson. We've gone for a walk around the school site to generate ideas. No fixed agenda, just coats on and notebooks in hand, to see what happens. We visit places the students wouldn't normally have access to. In one corridor, in the staff area, there is a display of photographs from the school's past; black and white class photos, sports teams, events. The students are fascinated. The next lesson one student asks if she can have access to these photos. I send her off to the caretakers to see if they will let her into the display cabinet. An hour or so later she returns, excited. Rather than opening the display cabinet, the caretakers had, instead, given her the key to the school archive, where she had discovered a wealth of photographs, registers and records. It was the beginning of a substantial project. The student started to research the history of the school, leading to her tracking down students who had been at the school in the 1950s. She interviewed them, creating a series of very powerful audio pieces.

It is March 2012. We have been working collaboratively with an artist and the Tate Modern. Every few weeks I have travelled to the Tate with a group of students and two colleagues to participate in workshops where we are generating ideas for a performance that will take place in the gallery itself. Eventually everything comes together and we perform in the Tate Modern, in the Poetry & Dream galleries. It is an incredible experience. As we leave the Tate one of the students asks me; "So, can I say I am an artist now?"

So, can I say I am an artist now?

Many practicing artists find themselves involved in some form of teaching. The potential conflict between making art and teaching it is often very evident. "Teaching is a way to lose interest in what you thought you were interested in" (Guston in Mayer :1988 : 77) When I first decided to go into teaching I was advised, by a friend already immersed in the profession, that I would stop making art.

At first, when undertaking my PGCE course to train to teach, I found that the world of art possibilities opened up in a way that they never had before. As my interest in art broadened, necessitated by a desire to teach as many aspects of art as possible, I found that books I already owned yielded hitherto unknown treasures, artists I had

overlooked were suddenly interesting. It was like discovering art for the first time. I realised that my own art education had been relatively poor, whether my school experience of drawing still-lives of trainers or copying pictures from the Radio Times, or my partisan degree where the battle-lines between painting and sculpture were drawn in the sand and I spent most of my time justifying why I wanted to do anything. I was determined to teach in a way that opened students up and gave them the confidence to explore their own ideas. Almost immediately I was struck by a powerful conviction, which has not left me, that the most important thing art allows us to do is have ideas. I became excited at the prospect of teaching art in a way that encouraged the students to develop ideas. Contemporary art offered a way in. Contemporary artists seemed unencumbered by loyalty to a particular medium or approach and I wanted to introduce this freedom into the classroom.

Somewhere between philosophy, research, manual training, technological training and marketing, an evolved profile of contemporary artistic practice has pressed the art school as a pedagogical concept itself to address what an artist is now and what the critical criteria and physical requirements are for educating one. (Madoff: 2009: ix)

The impact on my own practice was profound. Having trained as a painter I felt free, for the first time, to explore other approaches. Under the guise of lesson planning I could experiment with photography, sculpture, video and collage. I enjoyed working alongside my students and found that this approach had a fantastically positive effect on my classes; something recognised by other art educators. Richard Hickman writes 'One activity that...proved to be fruitful in terms of generating a positive learning atmosphere was painting alongside the pupils.' (Hickman: 2011: 44) Teaching, it seemed to me in fact, was a great way to maintain a practice after-all.

I started to become interested in making work that was more directly related to what I was doing within my role as a teacher. At the same time I began to question what teaching itself might be. Was it arguable that teaching could be a form of contemporary artistic practice? This idea was tremendously exciting. Instead of trying to balance a commitment to teaching on one hand and a desire to make art on the other, the possibility of the two becoming one was dawning. I started to see lessons and working with students in a different way. I wasn't interested in being "The Artist" in the classroom, but rather one among many. I may be the instigator of an event, but equally, I may be a participant.

“I said that I don’t think art can be taught, but I think a situation can be created where art might happen.” John Baldessari (Conversation with the author; October 2012)

Teaching as an Artistic Practice

What if the act of teaching in a classroom is an artistic act in its own right? What if the subject of art and the medium itself are education? This idea originated whilst participating in a teachers’ project at Tate Modern (which resulted in the 2008 Report *Teaching Through Contemporary Art. A Report on Innovative Practices in the Classroom*) set up to encourage teachers to re-engage with their own practice. I found myself maintaining two sketchbooks; the one I was already working in and a new one for the purposes of the project. It dawned on me that I had created a problem, both literally and metaphorically. Literally, because it meant having to carry two books around with me, but metaphorically in that I had to continually question which book was more appropriate for any given sketch, note or recording of an idea. It highlighted an issue in that I was compartmentalising my ideas rather than allowing them to develop. Completing the first sketchbook and making the decision to continue maintaining only one (the one I had begun for the project), where ideas for anything could be recorded, turned out to be revelatory. The sketchbook became a symbol of a unifying of my practice as an artist and that as an educator and the two, until then, separate roles began to merge. The primary intention of the Tate project had been to enable teachers to recognise the importance of re-engaging with their own artistic practice. The assumption was that this ‘practice’ would operate alongside teaching, related but distinct. This had, though, resulted in an unexpected outcome in my own case. The research and investigations undertaken led to a shift in understanding about what my teaching practice was and how it could be framed as an artistic practice. There is an unexpected irony in the establishing of a project that is designed to encourage teachers to re-connect with their practice as it ignores the possibility that teaching might be a form of artistic practice in its own right. The development from two separate sketchbooks into one unified receptacle for all thoughts and ideas became a simile. Over the course of the project I, literally, unified the disparate elements of my own practice and began to explore areas with a more unified approach.

In "The Really Ignorant Schoolmaster: Jef Geys, Amongst Many Others" Dieter Roelstraete, (*Afterall Journal*: Summer 2011: 87) points out "It is worth remembering here that living... cannot possibly be separated from making art."

This approach is significant because of its difference to the approach of the artist who teaches. In the case of an artist like Philip Guston his art was a separate pursuit to his teaching. The two elements of his practice existed in literally and metaphorically different spaces. As a consequence he felt torn between them, unable to commit the necessary energy and resources to one without feeling that it was, in some way, in conflict with the other.

Currently art stands alone within the school curriculum. Other subjects focus on the acquisition of facts and skills at a level intended to be built upon as the student progresses through the education system. A secondary school student in a science lesson, for example, is learning about science that has already been discovered, whilst a practicing scientist spends their time asking questions to which they do not know the answers and seeking out new knowledge. Art, however, has the capacity to allow, even very young, students to engage with their own practice in a manner that is no different to the mature artist. 'Being an artist is no different from learning to be an artist.' (Raqs Media Collective in Madoof: 2009: 74) In fact mature art practice is, by its nature, educative. Arguably, 'an artist's education is never finished.' (ibid: 74).

Accepting the notion that the role of the art teacher is not necessarily to impart knowledge to students, who perform the role of empty receptacles, is important in changing the dynamic within the classroom. Creating an environment in which everyone is making work, everyone is asking questions, everyone is learning. Investigating how collaborative practice might operate in such an environment becomes important, where the teacher becomes what John Baldessari calls, "a facilitator" (Baldessari & Craig-Martin Conversation in Madoof: 2009: 51) This dialogic approach is at the centre of effective art education. Moving away from a Socratic approach, away from the lecture, towards spaces in which discussion and debate can occur; in which 'the teacher may have prior knowledge of the 'object' but this does not mean they have exhausted all efforts and dimensions in knowing the 'object', (Shor & Friere: 1987) and in which the 'object' can be physical, conceptual or metaphorical.

This establishing of an environment is also important outside of the context of the classroom when looked at in relation to the development of the team, or faculty, both in relation to the literal spaces that we were inhabiting and the forums for discussion and debate. One of the driving forces in building the faculty at Welling School has been actively seeking to employ teachers who were practicing artists. The faculty is an extremely social one, with the defined areas of school (work) and independent time blurred. For a period of time many of us had studios in the same complex and would travel from school, and conversations there, to the studio, where conversations would be picked up. The physical environment is equally important: The art staff room has evolved into something akin to a living space in a shared house, with battered sofas and the all important tea urn. The walls are covered with the evidence of 'Fact Duels'; lists of questions that have arisen through conversation with various team members' ideas about their possible answers and the eventual resolutions recorded. One wall serves as a blackboard; a palimpsest for everything from reminders, materials lists, philosophical quotations and statements and drawings. Baldessari explained his own role, in the creation of the team at CalArts in the 1970s, as that of Cupid, ensuring that different people mixed and new ideas might result. He encouraged Daniel Buren and David Salle to travel to work together, knowing that 'something' would happen. Similarly many of the art faculty travel to and from work together, car-pooling, where discussions start or continue. This learning is as important as that going on within the classrooms. This environment is a physical manifestation of the participatory, collaborative, dialogic community that we have created and within which we operate. A micro-version of the environments established within the classrooms.

Physical spaces are an important factor in "creating (an environment) where art might happen" John Baldessari (Conversation with the author; October 2012)

Early in 2008 this manifested itself in the creation of "Shanty Town Studios", a project collaborating with groups of students of a variety of ages:

The school had recently been taken over by a trust of several schools and one of the initiatives the new trust brought with them was the installation of interactive white boards in every classroom. The whiteboards, whilst causing considerable controversy (due to the forced removal of existing blackboards and whiteboards), did generate an enormous quantity of large cardboard boxes. Seizing this fortuitous resource I decided to convert a classroom into a number of smaller cardboard

studios, inspired by the recent “Psycho Buildings” exhibition at the Hayward Gallery (2008). This act operated as an installation in its own right, but the intended collaboration with the students that would go on to be ‘taught’ within these spaces, I am arguing, can be defined as a performative ‘work’. There was an anarchic element to creating spaces which meant that the teacher could not see the students whilst teaching, and equally that they would be unable to see either the teacher, or the newly installed interactive whiteboard. ‘Teaching’ in the spaces for the next three days, working with students of different ages, bore some interesting outcomes. The spaces had an interesting effect on the students: The sixth formers immediately took ownership, occupying a space each and embellishing them with additional doorways, tunnels and the like. They pinned relevant images to their walls and obviously enjoyed the personalisation of the spaces in a manner normally impossible in a school classroom. When younger students came in for their lesson, the sixth formers were anxious that ‘their’ spaces were about to be invaded. The larger numbers in the GCSE and lower school groups meant that there were several students working in each space and this gave rise to most of the students instinctively working collaboratively with interesting dynamics occurring where students would have to negotiate how the spaces were being used.

There was an inevitable theatrical element to the project. But the project opened up interesting questions and debate surrounding the structure of classrooms and learning spaces. Conventional assumptions about how classrooms need to operate were overthrown. During the project the school was visited by Ofsted and one of the “Shanty Town” lessons was observed. There was no starter activity, no lesson objectives, the students could not see either the teacher or the board and the teacher could not see any of them without visiting their ‘studios’. In effect all expected conventions of a lesson about to be observed by an inspector had been eradicated. The inspector spent the lesson going from space to space discussing the work they were involved in, at one point having to crawl on her hands and knees through a tunnel entrance one of the students had built. She judged the lesson as ‘outstanding’ because she said that the engagement and learning that was taking place was phenomenal. The project was proof of the idea that it is the creation of a suitable environment for art to happen that is most important; hence Baldessari and Craig-Martin’s claim, ‘The most important thing about an art school is the creation of a sympathetic ambience.’ (Baldessari & Craig-Martin Conversation in Madoff: 2009: 42) This echoes Nato Thompson’s view of socially engaged art, where ‘Participation, sociality and the organisation of bodies within a space play a key feature.’

(Thompson: 2012: 21) I believe this statement describes a manner in which teaching in this way operates as socially engaged artistic practice. The teacher organises participation, and participates themselves, encourages collaboration and facilitates the organisation of the other participants.

The approach to the development of this project opened up interesting ideas relating to the role of the artist teacher as researcher. In establishing such a project I was not aware of what the outcomes might be and the project operated literally as action research. Instigating activities and creating situations in this way enabled me to explore the areas I was developing an interest in, with educational practice as being a form of research. I wanted to explore how the dynamic re-configuring of the classroom impacted on the manner in which both the students and I operated within it. It is only in actually undertaking such an experiment that one can reflect on the role of space and context in this way. As such I was learning along with the students and the re-configured classroom created a vibrant space in which this learning happened. It was a physical realization of the liberty and transformation referred to by Friere. By getting rid of the conventions of a classroom space and making it an un-classroom, a new type of space, or spaces, encouraged and nurtured a new type of approach. It served as a profound example of a performative and participatory event that engaged with those involved on a number of levels simultaneously, far removed from a traditional lesson and much closer to the manner in which an artist might devise a socially engaged collaborative project. It also poses interesting questions relating to the authorship of such a 'work'. I see my role as that of the artist and instigator of the work, a work that, in turn, facilitates the work of the other participants. Once the 'Shanty Town' had been constructed the collaborative element of the project began, with the spaces being physically manipulated, explored and utilized in ways that I could not have foreseen. The students involved developed the project in their own different directions.

This question of authorship is an important one. As the teacher, or facilitator, of this project I inevitably take some ownership over it but I see my role primarily as that of empowerment. Trust was a vital component. In the paradigm of assessment, models of teaching, expectations and outcomes this project operated within the space of the covert curriculum. With the impending Ofsted visit there was a very real risk of complete failure and it was essential that I took this risk on board and ensured that the students, the participants, felt supported. They needed to know that it was going

to be alright and to have faith in the idea. I was both the author of the work and the facilitator of their authorship too.

The “Shanty Town Studios” project was successful as an innovative approach to teaching but can it be viewed as a work of art in its own right? Does it stand as evidence of a practice, which is both educative and artistic? Part of the difficulty with this proposition is a difficulty in defining what ‘art’ might be in the first place. Whilst I do not propose to attempt to define what ‘art’ is, there is a growing acceptance in contemporary art of socially engaged practices and it is my argument that teaching has the potential to fall into this category.

One of the increasing difficulties in placing such practice within a broader context is the blurring of definitions. What is it that recognises something as art? The project ‘Palas Por Pistolas’ by Pedro Reyes from 2008, in which the artist collected 1527 weapons from residents of a Mexican town that was known for its high rate of fatal gun-related incidents, engaged the town by inviting its citizens to swap their firearms for vouchers that they could redeem for electronic goods. The weapons were then flattened by a steamroller in a public event and melted down, before being re-cast as 1527 shovels. Reyes then distributed these shovels to local groups, including schools, to plant 1527 trees. The shovels have been exhibited on several occasions and each time more trees are also planted. Obviously this project has tremendous symbolic political value as well as a genuine social purpose; the reduction of illegal firearms and increase in trees within an urban area; but what is it that defines it as art? Is it enough that Pedro Reyes refers to himself, and is referred to by others, as an artist? Is it the creation of a public event when flattening the weapons? Is it the exhibition of the finished shovels, alongside the documentation of the project? One could certainly argue that there is a pedagogic element to the project as well. By working with a community in an area known for gun related incidents and re-focusing on the potential of planting trees, Reyes, it could be argued, is undertaking an educational stance. Indeed so much contemporary socially engaged practice has an educational element. In his book “Education for Socially Engaged Art”, Pablo Helguera states

Today it is no secret that standard educational practices – such as engagement with audiences, inquiry-based methods, collaborative dialogues, and hands-on activities – provide an ideal framework for process-based and collaborative conceptual practices. (2011: xi)

Is it important that a project, such as “Shanty Town Studios” is defined as ‘art’? To some extent, following Duchamp, for something to be called art an artist only has to proclaim it so. Would projects, such as Helguera’s, be any less effective if they were not called art? One of the issues presented by these questions is whether or not defining something as art, is important at all?

This is an important query: art students attracted to this form of art-making often find themselves wondering whether it would be more useful to abandon art altogether and instead become professional community organisers, activists, politicians, ethnographers or sociologists. (Helguera: 2011: 4)

One could add teacher to this list. Perhaps a more important question is, what is it that potentially defines the role of an art teacher as different or removed from other teachers? I am arguing that by defining a practice as art, one is given more licence to experiment with the approaches that one takes. As an artist I am reflecting on my practice within the classroom in a very different way. The impact that these approaches have on my practice alongside teaching is significant. Whilst I have continued to make ‘objects’ much of my own practice is now immersed in more socially engaged and collaborative work.

AMALGUM COLLECTIVE

Specifically this resulted in the founding of a collective, Amalgum (www.amalgum.org), in 2008 with an artist and colleague, Andee Collard. Amalgum grew from working closely together with a group of students at school, but has developed into a concern that is interested in approaching socially engaged projects with an educative angle, outside of the context of school. An example of this took place in 2011, when Amalgum were involved in a project entitled: The Nunhead and District Municipal Museum and Art Gallery. (æ1) As part of the project, a series of lectures were taking place in an installation based on an imaginary theatre that had been discovered in the grounds of the invented museum. The premise of the project involved an alternative history in which the radical movements of the 1960s, including the Paris riots, had in fact, begun in southeast London in a theatre in Nunhead. Amalgum delivered a lecture on the origins of Fluxus, claiming that a chance meeting between John Cage (performing at the theatre) and Allan Kaprow, a member of the

audience, had resulted in a walk in the Nunhead Cemetery looking for mushrooms, and a conversation took place that formed the origins of the Fluxus movement. The Amalgum lecture was followed by an invitation for the audience to participate in a 'happening'. Each member of the audience was given a stick of Amalgum (our own branded chewing gum) and asked to chew it, sculpt it and return it. The chewing gum sculptures were then photographed and displayed on the Amalgum website.

This project, and others like it, are undertaking the notion of using teaching as an artistic practice. By design we adopted illustrative traditional models of 'teaching'. The use of the 'lecture' format, or the employment of blackboards, instantly giving the audience a sense of something being 'teaching'. It operates as a shortcut to understanding the performance as having an educational framework. Of course these 'symbols' have also been adopted by other artists when referencing models of teaching, most famously Joseph Beuys. As such the creation of the simulacrum teacher is also a simulacrum Beuys. It is impossible to adopt such props, the blackboard in particular, within the context of an art performance and not be referencing Beuys. The blackboard has now become a relic, especially within our own school, and the decision to resurrect it is as much about an understanding of its role in the work of Beuys as it is in its symbol for teaching. It is important that in the face of a blind desire to adopt the latest technology it is also seen as a subversive tool. Where the interactive whiteboard is wallpaper, blandly displaying whatever topic is being taught, the blackboard has become a covert instrument and an art material. Just as Beuys created a personality of the lecturer for his performances, we, as Amalgum, adopted the spectacle of puppet teachers, fulfilling cliché appearances to emphasise the relationship between our performance and that of a teacher.

Does the shift in context, from the classroom to an installation as part of a broader art event, emphasise the idea of teaching as a form of artistic practice further? Within the context of contemporary art practice there is unlikely to be much debate about the validity of the Amalgum performance as an 'art work' seen within the context of performance art, but projects such as the "Shanty Town Studios", when undertaken in the context of a school environment, are more difficult to define and be accepted as 'art'.

3. ARTIST TEACHERS: TEACHER ARTISTS

The relationship between the practice of art and the teaching of it is an interesting one. There have been fantastic examples of practitioners who have devoted significant proportions of their careers to education. Typically this has been in the further and higher education sector. The expectation that teachers at university will remain practitioners; remain artists, in their own right is almost a given. One of the primary values of art education post-compulsory schooling, is that of the staff modeling as practicing artists. At the very least “As an artist-teacher, engagement with the art world is essential” (Daichendt: 2010: 120). Nevertheless, there are examples where the relationship between the practice of art and the practice of teaching becomes more inter-related; where the teaching could possibly be viewed as an element of their practice as artists and not something else that runs in parallel. There are also many examples of artists who, whilst not necessarily actively engaging in education, practice in a way which operates as educative. In attempting to place my own developing practice within an established context, I have investigated the work of several artists that I feel represent these approaches. I conducted a series of interviews built around a pre-agreed number of questions. The idea behind them was to focus the conversations on the educational aspects and elements within their work.

BORED ARTIST SELFISH TEACHER

John Baldessari

John Baldessari's career has been largely informed by teaching. He began teaching in 1959, initially in state secondary schools before moving on to teach at colleges and eventually university level. After a long period at CalArts, he left in 1986, teaching part-time at UCLA. He eventually gave up teaching in 2008 having achieved international success and recognition as a conceptual artist. Much of Baldessari's early work appears to have a direct link to his teaching. Working with an eclectic range of processes that included painting, photography and video, Baldessari often made work that came from situations that he constructed as part of his teaching, or that were informed by a collaborative and dialogic approach that came from the classroom. Despite this he is somewhat reticent to admit the influence that working in education has had.

Henry Ward – I am particularly interested in the way in which a lot of your early work seems to directly relate to your role as a teacher; video pieces like “Baldessari Sings Sol Lewitt” and so on. Do you think having a focus on teaching at that point in your career, meant that you approached making art in a different way from the way you might approach it if you’re in a studio working?

John Baldessari – Well what you said there; you said ‘having a focus on teaching’, I didn’t have a focus on teaching, it was just to support myself. My focus was on making art.

HW – So would it be that because your focus was on making art, but you found yourself in that role for financial reasons, that it changed the way in which you approached things? I just wondered because in some of those very early video pieces in particular, I understand that you were making those things alongside your students or actually in the classroom so to speak, and I was interested in whether that changed the way in which you approached things at all when you were working within that role or whether it was all the same thing?

JB – I think it’s all the same thing. I think, that particular piece wouldn’t have happened if I hadn’t been teaching at CalArts because we had a lot. We had something like 26 Sony PortaPak video cameras and so I had access to the equipment and I was able to do that. Now if I’d been on my own, you know I didn’t have any money to rent out or to buy equipment, so that wouldn’t have happened. I can say that.

HW – Yes. So you think it was purely a logistical thing; the space was there; the equipment was there, so you could utilise it in that way, rather than, necessarily, a conceptual difference?

JB – Yes, I remember very succinctly, very accurately, it was a Sunday afternoon and I was kind of bored. I drove out to school and into the classroom that I used and I decided that my Sunday I would spend, making videos. That’s it. I never saw it as being very important, it was just, you know, trying to escape boredom. I think that’s always been one of my reasons for doing art. I think it applies. You know, we try to escape boredom. That’s why we do art.

Despite these assurances, his work does appear to have been influenced by his involvement in teaching in a number of ways. Whilst operating as a teacher his practice was far broader than it has been since he retired to concentrate on his studio. There are, of course, many factors that might have an influence on such a change, but I am inclined to believe that the daily practice of teaching; of interacting with students; instigating and participating in discussions and debates; and developing ideas collaboratively had a tremendously positive impact on the range of work that he made. Perhaps the issue is not whether teaching has influenced Baldessari, but rather how he valued the role of teaching in the first place. Earlier in the same conversation he says that “I try to make it, my approach, and again this was kind of selfish, I’d just try to make it as much fun for me as possible. And so I’d figure well I’m having fun then probably the students are, hopefully. They’re having fun and art should be about having fun.” (Conversation with the author: October 2012)

Much of Baldessari’s early output was created as a part of his role as a teacher, as opposed to specifically created as art. A good example would be his series of photographs “Hitting Various Objects With A Golf Club So That They Are In The Center Of Photograph”, 1972-3. This work came about as an activity that Baldessari undertook with the class he was teaching, taking them out behind the institution to a field where they set up the camera and attempted the instruction he had devised. Such playful, instructional-based activities continued to form a huge part of Baldessari’s teaching, which include inventive lists of tasks that have been continually mined by art teachers. When Baldessari instigated these activities, or filmed his videos, his focus was making art: Art that nonetheless, initially operated within an educational context and led to a specific educational outcome. The eventual display of these pieces in other contexts; galleries and museums, did not change their status as artworks but increased the audience for them.

This is an important question. Does the intention behind the creation of a work of art alter the way in which an audience should read it? Baldessari comments that he believes, whole-heartedly that you cannot teach art, only create an environment in which it happens and therefore, he had no central idea to ‘teach’. As a teacher, by creating just such an environment, Baldessari not only inspired his students to develop their own artistic practice, but had also created the ideal arena in which to operate artistically.

MAKING SOMETHING HAPPEN

Jeremy Deller

“I went from being an artist who makes things, to being an artist who makes things happen.” (Deller in Thompson : 2012: 17)

Jeremy Deller is largely responsible for re-defining the role of the contemporary artist in Great Britain over the last decade. When he won the Turner Prize, in 2004, there was considerable discussion about whether he qualified as an artist at all. Much of his practice is immersed in socially engaged and, arguably, educational projects. He has, however, undertaken little direct involvement in education himself. “I do the odd talk at art colleges, I don’t do tutorials anymore, or whatever they’re called. I spent a year in California where I was teaching at an art college but it wasn’t really teaching it was just talking and hanging around really. My experience of teaching is very narrow.” (Conversation with the author: October 2012)

Deller concerns himself with a very broad range of interests; from The Miners Strike of the early 1980s, to professional wrestling and bats. His approach to projects has a direct correlation to the way in which an art teacher might undertake art projects within the context of a classroom. He begins with research into an area that interests him. He negotiates with other practitioners, as and when they become important or essential to the development of the project. He considers how an audience might respond and how to present to that audience. He makes very little himself but, instead, operates as a facilitator, ensuring that the project happens. As his work has developed, over the last ten years in particular, it has become more and more socially engaged. He has worked with a gardening society in Germany (*Speak to the Earth and it will Tell You*. Klein Gardens. Münster. 2007-17); organised a unionised protest march through the streets of Manchester (Procession. Manchester. 2009); and arranged for bat walks around the Olympic site in Stratford, London (2012). In each case he has been instrumental in ‘making something happen’.

Deller’s practice is educational in that it concerns itself with bringing about change in the mind of the audience, often through participation. Whilst all art, and in fact anything, can become the focus of learning, it is this participatory element that shifts this work into an educational sphere. If we return to Baldessari’s idea about creating an environment where things happen, it is the participation in this constructed

environment or situation that generates the learning. Whether this is 'art' or not starts to become irrelevant.

Deller can also be viewed as a researcher and this is important as it raises another aspect of this notion of artist-teacher, becoming artist-teacher-researcher. By investigating radically different areas, Deller undertakes the role of researcher, immersing himself in periods of developing understanding about a particular theme or subject.

The convention is that an art teacher is required to respond to a particular theme. When the GCSE papers are released in early January each year, art teachers read through the questions and begin the task of researching the different areas, expanding on the artists and ideas provided by the exam board. This research role is not dissimilar to the approach adopted by Deller when beginning a body of work. Archiving existing material, making connections, researching relevant artists and bringing all the material together in order to make a cohesive resource for the students is the same as the construction of an exhibition that mines existing archives, interviews and collections to create a new narrative. Deller's practice is akin to that of the GCSE art teacher and their emphasis on themes.

DAILY PRACTICE OF TEACHING

Jef Geys

Jef Geys is perhaps the best example of 'the artist as teacher as artist'. For over thirty years Geys operated as the self-titled *Teacher of Positive Aesthetics* at a through school in the small town of Balen in Belgium. Geys undertook a variety of projects within the school, working in a cross-curricular manner and without a given remit, with his activities documented by an assistant whose job it was to present a monthly report to the school authorities. He was not obliged to attend school meetings or perform any of the other tasks normally expected of the teaching staff. He was 'interested in using his art practice to heighten young people's awareness of the world around them, presenting them with concepts and information through artworks normally considered only for adults'. (Harding: 2005: 117)

For the majority of his career Geys has worked in relative obscurity. Whilst this is due, in part, to his insistence in operating in his native Flemish, it is also largely due to his

self-affirmed position as a school teacher. Geys has fastidiously documented each of his projects, often in self-published newspapers and magazines. After representing Belgium in the Venice Biennale, Geys has begun to receive more international recognition.

Education is inseparable from Geys' practice. His decision, early on in his career, to work within the context of a school, albeit an extremely progressive one, means that many of his projects and much of his output as an artist focus on educational ideas. An excellent example of his cross-curricular approach is his world map playground piece. Geys proposed to decorate the school playground with a giant map of the world. The idea was for the students to collaborate in the making of the map, complete with grid references. Each day the school population was then invited to bring in newspaper articles and use the map to show where the news was happening in the world. These articles were displayed on notice boards around the playground, surrounding the map, encouraging students to investigate what was going on in the world. Incredibly, the school's geography teacher objected to Geys' 'interference' in his subject 'feeling that the art teacher had no business teaching geography, much less politics.' (Roelstraete: Summer 2011: 89)

Geys' lessons were peppered with other cross-curricular and cross-discipline aspects. He sees art practice, and teaching, as a way of engaging students in the world and that art, as a subject, could be a vehicle for everything else. He would often start or conclude his lessons by encouraging the immigrant children in his lesson to teach some of their native language to the others in the class. Indeed he '(invited) his students to teach him instead, to teach each other things he does not know himself.' (Roelstraete: Ibid: 90) Geys sees teaching practice as art practice and a way of engaging an audience and collaborating with them. His belief in the ability of young people to experience and understand highly conceptual propositions was central to his practice. Geys sees the educational aspect of art as vital, 'not an add-on workshop after the show is installed.' (Harding: 2005: 120)

Examining this question of context in relation to Geys' work it is interesting to examine a project he has undertaken outside of the environment of the school in Balen. For the Venice Biennale, in 2009, Geys presented an entirely new project. He displayed a series of photographs of weeds, alongside photographs of locations and map references in various cities across the world. The photographs were accompanied by lists of the characteristics of each plant, and a herbarium containing

the dried plants themselves. Geys had invited four acquaintances, living in four different large cities, to explore a pre-determined square kilometre of their city, looking for twelve wild plants growing in the streets. The premise of the project was no different to the manner in which Geys operated within his role as a 'school teacher'. The project had a broad cross-curricular founding, arguably as much about science and geography as art. The only shift here was in the involvement of individuals outside of the school institution and the display of the documentation at an international art fair. Fundamentally the action was the same as a project undertaken in the context of a school classroom: It began with a pre-determined question and a set of rules, or criteria, that the participants were instructed to follow (a set area to explore, the instruction to gather twelve specimens); There were intended outcomes that were to be displayed once they had been reached. One could view the four invited participants as metaphors for the division of groups in a classroom; four tables each with its own goals. There was an equality to the expectations for each participant, much as one would establish in a lesson, but, at the same time, there was differentiation regarding the different contexts, in this case cities, in which they found themselves. In this project Geys has utilized the practice of teaching as an artistic approach.

4. ART AS A VEHICLE FOR CROSS-CURRICULAR TEACHING

When I first became a teacher I only wanted to teach art. Teaching it in an innovative and exciting way was also vital and this led me to explore a whole range of different methods and theories; experimenting, in particular, with exposing students to contemporary art practice and encouraging their development as artists in their own right.

Much contemporary practice stretches accepted definitions of art and shifts into areas otherwise defined as social politics, science, geography and anthropology. The subject of art has the potential to be anything and everything. The potential to tie up with other subjects is rich. The key component that art brings to this is the facilitation of questioning, dialogue and discussion and the development of students' oracy and confidence; the building of lessons around a dialogic approach.

This question of 'What is Art?' is of paramount importance in light of continual debates over its validity as a subject in the curriculum. It is difficult to justify the subject, when the evidence provided is still classrooms full of students making bad drawings of peppers cut in half. When this is set against the seemingly weighty subjects; English, maths and science, art struggles to hold its head up. But this is an oversight. When taught well and delivered as a vehicle for cross-curricular engagement and the development of ideas, art is essential. In the context of the argument for the so called facilitating subjects, art should be recognised as fundamental.

All subjects, when continued to the highest level, involve questioning and exploration. We require our scientists to ask questions to which there are not yet answers; our historians to formulate new theories about the happenings of the past; our mathematicians to develop new ways of operating. But at school level, so many of these subjects are focused on the acquisition of knowledge and on the recall of prescribed facts. Art has the potential to introduce this questioning earlier. It is, after all, one of the first ways that we engage with the world and communicate that engagement. We pick up a pencil and scrawl something before we formulate spoken words and certainly before we write them down. We collect objects and put them together, we make things. The focus on art education being about developing skills undoubtedly has its place. The development of craft is vital. But more vital still, is the

development of the ability to ask questions and negotiate ideas. Art can do this. It is important that we recognize that this is itself a skill. Whilst much of the curriculum at school is focused on the building of a foundation of knowledge, art is about equipping the participants with the skills and tools needed to address the questions they are asking.

An early example was a GCSE project inspired by an exhibition at the Hayward Gallery, "Spectacular Bodies" (2000). The exhibition made the link between science, anatomy and art, through works from Leonardo da Vinci to contemporary artists such as Marc Quinn and John Isaacs. It was a brilliant piece of curation, successfully balancing information, scientific fact and artistic interpretation. An approach which has become much more prominent over the last decade as we return, in the 21st century, to a fascination with the Wunderkammer. The success of an institution such as the Wellcome Foundation gallery is a testament to this renewed interest. Taking a year 10 group to visit "Spectacular Bodies", we used it as a starting point for a project entitled "Anatomy, Medicine and Being Human". The students were encouraged to make links between what they were making and discussing in their art lessons and what they were covering in science. Some focused on the anatomy aspect, making scientific inspired drawings; others explored more theoretical elements, investigating psychology or looking into gene theory. The project proved a huge success. The wealth of possible inspiration was endless, and the students were obviously excited by the way in which it brought aspects of their learning elsewhere into their art lessons.

Another early example of this cross-curricular approach we undertook was developed with several colleagues from art and the English faculty. We set up half the year group in year 7 to base their art lessons thematically on looking at World War I. The students were studying Michael Morpurgo's "Private Peaceful" as the text in their English lessons. In art we looked at learning how to screen-print and focused on propaganda posters from the WWI era. We made no explicit reference to the link with English, instead opting to allow the students to make the links themselves. This worked well, with students beginning to talk spontaneously about what they were studying in English. Equally English teachers talked of how students would explain what they were making in art and how they could relate it to the text.

The first major project that developed this cross-curricular approach more fully, was SciArt. Set up following an Ofsted inspection, in which the science faculty was

highlighted as an area of extreme weakness in the school, the decision was taken to cut back the number of hours that we allocated to science (initially in year 8 as a pilot) and to give an additional period to the art faculty. We wanted to look at linking the two subjects together, much as we had done with the “Anatomy, Medicine and Being Human” GCSE project some years earlier, and see whether aspects of the curriculum for science could be supported, or even delivered, through art.

Initially we came up with the idea of treating the students as explorers. So many early scientists were also artists and polymaths. Indeed the separation of the disciplines is relatively recent. If we think of da Vinci as a model this is obvious, but one can also look at more recent examples; the role of drawing and observation in the work of Darwin; the necessity of visualising so many scientific ideas and discoveries, the DNA structure for example. The students were all given small notebooks (small enough to fit into their blazer pockets) and encouraged to carry them at all times and record ideas and observations. In the lessons we focused on using making as a way of understanding ideas. There was some resistance from the science teachers, and also a degree of misunderstanding. The first expectation was that art teachers would help the students to ‘illustrate’ areas that the science staff would be covering. It was essential that this wasn’t what SciArt would be. The SciArt lessons needed to change the way we were thinking about delivering art. We needed to deliver the lessons from a scientific standpoint. The question, whether initiated by the teacher or one of the students, had to be at the centre of the lesson.

An excellent illustration of this is the development of a series of lessons looking at elements and compounds. One of the most profound aspects of developing the SciArt course has been the necessity to re-learn as teachers. SciArt staff are required to read around the areas of science that they will be working with, in advance of teaching the students. Through thinking about how to explain the difference between an element and a compound we devised a sculpture project. The students were to work in teams and the class was presented with a wide variety of materials, each representing different elements (gold, mercury, plutonium, iron, etc). The teams had to select the ‘elements’ they wanted to work with and then explore the idea of creating sculptures, or ‘compounds’, using their chosen materials. They had to consider titles for their works, that related to the expected properties the resulting compounds might have, and to display their completed works, providing them with a relevant context that further emphasised the properties. The project proved immensely successful. The notion of elements and compounds was firmly

understood and the students also began to demonstrate a growing understanding of how different compounds had different properties and why.

We continued to explore areas within science and art to develop the SciArt course. After a successful first year, albeit one in which the two faculties operated side by side rather than wholly linked, we decided to run it for a second year, refining the projects. One of the most successful aspects of this project has been the ease with which students have adapted to the 'new' subject. Contrary to expectations students welcomed it with open arms and have not questioned its validity. In fact in student surveys, and discussions with parents, SciArt is among the most favoured subjects they follow.

In developing the course further, we have now extended it to cover both years 7 and 8. Right from the beginning of their time at secondary school, students are experiencing a third of their allocated time for science in art rooms under the umbrella of SciArt. The aforementioned notebooks are used across both SciArt and science lessons and have become a conduit to ensure that the learning is linked between the two subject areas. Students begin lessons by getting their notebooks out and using them as a prompt to talk about the things they have been doing in the previous lesson, hence the students become the primary vehicle for collaboration between art teachers and science teachers. They are at the centre of the lesson and their questions form the basis of the progress that the lessons make. Assessment is now formally linked too, with the SciArt assessments contributing to those in science.

One of the implications of the SciArt project has been the necessity for the teachers to re-learn or re-assess their own learning. By teaching 'out of subject' staff are required to literally learn alongside the students. Initially this manifests itself in the reading around areas prior to working on them in the classroom, but as the project progresses, the collaborative learning becomes more central to the delivery of the course. In being closer to the learning, by having revised or, in some cases, just learnt information, the teacher is far better placed to understand the possible pitfalls and incomprehension. There is a growing argument that this detachment from the content is what makes such cross-curricular projects so successful. The teacher literally undertakes the role of the 'ignorant schoolmaster'. There is no pretence that the teacher is the all-knowing oracle and the breakdown of the potential barriers between student and teacher is all the more achievable. Instead the collaborative activity of learning becomes more evident. The teacher begins to operate as a

perpetual student or researcher, undertaking lessons as research questions, developing an understanding, not only of the subject but of how to approach it. In the same way in which so many contemporary artists now undertake specific projects, with the work they produce being responses to the different situations and areas that they find themselves in, the contemporary teacher artist can explore unfamiliar subjects and generate a more investigative and enriched experience by doing so, both for themselves and the students they are working with. In the same manner as an artist like Jeremy Deller might undertake research into the industrial revolution when preparing to put together an exhibition on the subject ("All That is Solid Melts into Air" – Hayward Touring) What this enables is a move away from the potentially jaded experience of a teacher repeating, for the umpteenth time, a particular lesson or project. It creates a living breathing learning environment in which all stakeholders, staff and students, are equally engaged with the investigation.

Scientist - As an artist, when you are with scientists first moment, you feel like a clown

Artist - Yeah, yeah

S - Because you don't know, and we are educated with the idea that you are supposed to know, know how things work. But as an artist you deal with stuff that you have no idea about. Its a lot of....

A - Actually the only thing that the artist is good at is 'not knowing' something. When everybody else gets paid, gets gratified for knowing something, the artist mainly works with the fact that he's not knowing something

S - Yes and that's

A - He's an idiot

S - Yes but as a productive thing

(BBC Documentary: Storyville 2012-2013 "Expedition to the End of the World")

teach to show: to direct: to impart knowledge or art to: to guide the

studies of: to exhibit so as impress upon the mind: to impart the knowledge or art of: to accustom: to counsel. – v.i. to practice giving instructions
(Chambers English Dictionary)

Science lessons have an obsession with content. The students are required to record a huge quantity of information in their books for later reference. The teachers themselves appear desperate to prove their own 'knowledge'.

As a teacher of art, by comparison, I feel like an idiot. My lessons are largely devoid of such facts and content. I often have no idea where they are going, and no criteria with which to judge whether I reached there. But something is happening. The students in art lessons are enthused. They are engaged. They are interested. Perhaps this approach is, what S. F. Melrose describes as "disciplined unknowing" (Confession of an Uneasy Spectator). Do the students in the science lessons 'learn' more? What 'learning' is really going on?

Art education is about investigation, exploration and discovery. It is about not-knowing. What makes it important is its focus on ideas and questions. But can this approach be used in other areas of the curriculum? Can this 'not-knowing' work in the context of other subjects in the curriculum? What happens when a science lesson is 'taught', or rather experienced, in this way?

Strip the content away and science and art are, arguably, the same thing. The conversation, transcribed above, took place between a scientist and an artist aboard a boat exploring the coast of Greenland in a BBC Storyville documentary entitled "Expedition to the End of the World", in which a group of artists, scientists, anthropologists, archeologists, geologists and biologists travelled to Greenland to investigate the impact of climate change. The two men were having the conversation whilst sitting on the deck of the boat, both with notebooks in hand. The artist was making a drawing. The scientist was writing some notes. Both were recording their observations. They were both doing the same thing.

The National Curriculum actually makes little distinction between the core ideas about each subject. The National Curriculum for Science outlines the following areas:

The four key concepts to be covered are:

- Scientific Thinking
- Applications and Implications of Science
- Cultural Understanding
- Collaboration

The three key processes to be covered are:

- Practical and Enquiry Skills
- Critical Understanding of Evidence
- Communication

We can see that with a tiny semantic tweak we could have the following list for the art curriculum:

The four key concepts to be covered are:

- Artistic Thinking
- Applications and Implications of Art
- Cultural Understanding
- Collaboration

The three key processes to be covered are:

- Practical and Enquiry Skills
- Critical Understanding of Evidence
- Communication

What is 'Scientific Thinking'?

The dictionary defines scientific as: demonstrative, producing knowledge: hence of, relating to, based on, devoted to, according to, used in, or versed in, science.

think to exercise the mind: to revolve ideas in the mind: to judge: to be of opinion: to consider: to bethink oneself: to conceive or hit on a thought: to

aspire or form designs.

(Chambers English Dictionary)

The purpose, it would seem, is to encourage students to produce knowledge of their own through revolving ideas around and forming opinions. To observe and to record those observations, enabling them to formulate theories and demonstrate an understanding. The purpose is not, to learn a series of pre-agreed facts and be able to regurgitate them when asked.

The argument, it would appear, is for a completely different approach to education as a whole. Not specifically for the teaching of art but for teaching itself.

Bob & Roberta Smith has himself photographed holding a placard that states “All Schools should be Art Schools”. (ae4) Should all teachers be art teachers? The definition of an art teacher needs unpicking. What does the National Curriculum for Art outline?

- 1.Creativity
- 2.Competence
- 3.Cultural Understanding
- 4.Critical Understanding

Creativity includes in its definition; exploring and experimenting with ideas, taking risks and learning from mistakes. Competence includes the ability to investigate, analyse, reflect and evaluate as well as make informed choices. Engaging with a range of images and artefacts from different contexts and exploring ideas and identifying meanings are all included. This description of what is required in the delivery of art is not so different to the requirements of the science curriculum. The focus, in both, is on the investigative and exploratory. In fact, the focus is on the creative. If we accept that creativity is the facility to explore, formulate and develop ideas. Successful teaching, whether it be in the context of an art studio or science laboratory, should be about enabling the students to become creative in their engagement with the world.

In undertaking the ‘teaching’ of science, as art teachers, we have undoubtedly stepped away from our comfort zone. If we accept the premise of the artist in the above conversation, we are ‘idiots’. We do not ‘know’. In a potentially naïve belief

that we could re-engage the students with learning through approaching things from a different perspective we have had to 'learn' ourselves at the same time. This has opened up the manner in which lessons operate in a number of interesting ways. Having 'content' that has to be gone through inevitably changes the way in which lessons are approached. In SciArt the exploration into a given field is a genuine exploration not a re-treading of a path already familiar to the teacher. Instead of the teacher already possessing the 'knowledge' and finding ways to pass this on to the students – leading to the default, content driven, approach of the science faculty, and lessons built around the recording of facts, we find ourselves in a situation where we, as teachers, know no more than the students. They have questions, and so do we. Together we need to find ways of answering them.

The emphasis of the lessons has re-focused on the documentation of findings. The SciArt notebook has become an essential tool in this form of teaching and learning. All the students are encouraged to have them with them at all times. These notebooks operate in a different way to the manner in which we would normally utilize sketchbooks and in a completely different way to the science exercise book. The students are encouraged to make notes, drawings, collect material about anything that interests them, about any observations they might make. Whilst we have not removed thematic content we are trying to enable students to develop their own areas of interest and questions about the world around them. The notebooks become receptacles for such investigations and questions. The collection of a squashed insect. An unanswerable question. A noted observation.

Returning to the National Curriculum and thinking about the key processes that it asks of the study of science; enquiry skills are vital. Equally in the art curriculum it is the exploration of ideas, under the umbrella of creativity, that is key and that these notebooks facilitate.

In developing a more forward thinking approach to the delivery of the curriculum and to teaching in general perhaps we need to explore this shift away from subject specialism into a more exploratory investigative approach to working in the classroom. Instead of the assumed model of a subject expert imparting knowledge, we can construct a situation in which the expertise is not subject specific but, instead, in undertaking ways of facilitating students to engage with learning.

In reality, students are already engaged with learning anyway. The issue, for so

many, is that this engagement appears to be with the 'wrong' sort of learning. In Hidden Curriculum, a project by Annette Krauss, students in Utrecht were interviewed about the types of 'learning' activities they got up to in school that were outside of the conventional 'learning' environment; the classroom. Students were invited to produce work that explained this learning including photography, videos and public performances. They included explanations of cheating methods, passed on from student to student, as well as different ways in which students used and activated the school buildings. This sort of 'learning' is going on in every school all the time. There is no constructed curriculum to ensure that it is covered, and no teachers to deliver it, only the students themselves and the environment they are in. Is it possible to assimilate this within the context of the classroom and to tap into this, obvious, desire to learn new things?

Human beings want to know things. We all have an insatiable desire to learn and to acquire new skills and knowledge. Why then is so much 'schooling' unsuccessful? The appeal of this 'hidden' curriculum inevitably lies in its subversive nature. Time spent finding ways of circumnavigating expectations and 'learning' is far more attractive than old-fashioned graft and revision. In one video from the 'Hidden Curriculum' project a girl describes how she and a friend spent hours practicing hiding key French words between their fingers and working in front of the mirror to ensure that they could look at the words in a test without being seen by the teacher. They succeeded. The time spent practicing sneaking a look at the words could, instead, have been spent learning the words in the first place. Why, then, was it more appealing to develop a way of 'cheating'? I think it can be argued that their approach is both more creative and results in a more genuine discovery.

If we return to some of the key aspects of the National Curriculum this 'cheating' actually represents the most fantastic example of ingenuity and creativity. It demonstrates a clear example of a student developing a creative solution to a situation.

Is the argument for the role of the teacher to operate entirely differently? How do we, as art teachers, approach our positions in a different way? How do we, as SciArt teachers, approach our positions in a different way? The notion of the manner in which we work within a school as being that of an artist-in-residence, developing projects in collaboration with one another and the students, rather than as 'teachers' is an important element. By undertaking the practice of art teaching as an artistic

practice in which we approach the classroom from a different perspective creates a different environment to the environment that one would normally find in the classroom.

The lesson outcome is a crutch upon which much teaching relies. Outlining at the beginning of a lesson what students can expect to have done by the end is often seen as a model of good practice. There is certainly a place for such structures, and, on occasions, it can be useful to have an idea of where things are intended to go. However, much of the approach that we are undertaking rejects this structure in favour of more genuine exploration. By developing the idea of the artist-in-residence, where a broader project is being investigated and the lesson forms just one small aspect of a much larger journey, it is often difficult to have a clear idea of the objective of a lesson, at least specifically.

Lesson objectives become irrelevant and are inappropriate. Because the outcomes are contextually driven they exceed any preconceived expectations and are a result of genuine exploration and questioning. Again the notion of trust is extremely important. Trust of the teacher by the participants but also trust of the participants by the teacher.

Inspired by the success of SciArt and looking for a way of addressing the literacy difficulties that the school continues to have, in 2012 we introduced a second cross-curricular course within the art faculty. Linking with the history faculty we have developed a course entitled "The Canon". We worked with the history faculty to look at key works of art from the last thousand years, and how these works could be used as starting points for discussion to enable the students to develop a chronological understanding of history. The history faculty took the opportunity to re-write their own schemes of work and so we have created a linked curriculum in which, each week, year 7 students will investigate a new work of art, exploring it both formally and also as a starting point for understanding the historical context in which it was made. Many of the lessons are devoted to discussion. It could be argued that the hour is a 'talking' lesson. Alongside this they attend history lessons where the same period is being covered.

The Canon is, perhaps, the most obvious example of how art, as a stand-alone subject, can prove to be a vehicle for cross-curricular teaching. The history faculty embraced the idea very quickly and saw the writing of a new course as being the

impetus they needed to develop their own curriculum in a more bespoke manner. But since we started running The Canon, in September 2012, other areas of the school have shown an interest in linking with it. Most notable the Languages department, who have expressed a desire to use the same images as starting points for their lesson each week, encouraging the students to use descriptive language to explain what they have covered in their Canon lessons.

These projects are excellent examples of how art can begin to infiltrate and develop the curriculum as a whole, but what then goes on, or should go on, in the art classroom? How does the subject facilitate young people to question the world around them and generate ideas of their own?

John Baldessari claims that, "I don't think art can be taught, but I think a situation can be created where art might happen." (Conversation with the author; October 2012). Could we take this statement a stage further and say, "It is impossible to teach how to think. Only create an environment in which thinking happens"? I think that the primary aim of the art teacher should be to enable students to think and question for themselves. Therefore how does one create the environment in which this can take place?

5. REAL ARTISTS IN RESIDENCE

Whilst Wikipedia (2013) describes the role of the artist in residence as '(allowing) an individual to explore his/her practice within another community; meeting new people, using new materials, experiencing life in a new location', Nancy Slonims, Programme Leader for Illustration at Middlesex University, says that in the context of the university "the role of the Artist in Residence is to facilitate students' work" (<http://www.mdx.ac.uk/aboutus/news-events/news/artistinresidence.aspx>).

Artists in residence exist in many forms and in a very broad range of institutions and situations. Many schools have utilized them. Often the intention, particularly when an educational institution is involved, is to bring a fresh viewpoint. As Slonims states the artist in residence is there, in part, to facilitate the students' work. Another aspect of the role, however, is the idea of a residency. What does this mean? To be a resident somewhere is, according to the Chambers English Dictionary to occupy 'the official abode...a period during which it is held.' (CED: 1990 :1249) If we are to accept the notion that teaching art can be a form of artistic practice then we can start to examine the possibility that art teachers can, and should, operate as artists in residence within their schools. How do such long-term residences affect the manner in which the artist, and in this case also the teacher, create work? How do students themselves operate as artists-in-residence? After all, the students often spend five or seven years within the institution; in itself a long-term residency.

My own residency is now in its thirteenth year. This residency affects the manner in which I engage with my practice. The work that I make, and the way in which I engage with the institution through this work, are entirely interlinked, and over time it has become a dialogic relationship. I have reflected on the impact that remaining in one institution for this period has had on my practice, and also the impact my prolonged residency has had on the institution itself.

Jef Geys worked as a teacher at his Belgium school for almost thirty years. What is interesting about Geys' practice is his focus on education and the manner in which he created work in the context of the classroom and as an art teacher. Geys operates in a way that dismisses any separation between teaching and art. 'Ultimately, teaching art means teaching life' (Groys in Madoff: 2009: 27) He modelled this idea of the artist in residence; Geys was the art teacher, therefore his work was about being an art teacher. Or rather his work was art teaching.

This embracing of one's situation, this acceptance of the circumstances in which one finds one's self and the idea that the work you make and the practice you engage in reflects this situation, is extremely important. If, as a teacher of art, one attempts to separate one's private practice from the practice of teaching in the classroom then one is always in conflict. I think that this is why an artist like Philip Guston, by all accounts a remarkable teacher, could not continue with his educational commitments. He found the conflict he was addressing in his own practice, too difficult to balance with the discussions he had with students. In contrast, by emerging myself in the concepts and ideas around teaching art, and recognising this as an art practice in its own right, I have liberated myself. The two sketchbooks I had originally kept, separating my 'teaching' ideas from my 'art' ideas have literally and metaphorically become one.

6. PEDAGOGY AS CONTEMPORARY ARTISTIC PRACTICE

The approach to teaching art at Welling School is a radical one. We have been developing a way of delivering the art curriculum in which the staff and students operate as practicing artists. Within the context of the school environment, and in particular the art lesson, this distinction is important as it moves away from art being a subject in which the teacher has the knowledge and this is transferred to the students over a period of time. Instead, we view it as an arena in which a variety of questions are posed, issues raised and outcomes occur; a dialogic forum. Sometimes outcomes are 'made' by students, sometimes they manifest themselves in things created by staff and often they result in collaborative projects, instigated by staff or students. This doesn't mean that we do not plan or prepare for the things that happen, if anything the planning needed is even more meticulous. But it encourages a more open-minded approach to classroom practice. This is not unprecedented, and indeed Frank Cizek experimented with such methods in Vienna as early as the 1920s.

What he rejected was the conventional and academic notion of the teacher as the possessor of some wisdom to be transmitted to the child whose mind was, as it were, a '*tabula rasa*' awaiting the inspiration of prior and predetermined knowledge. (Malvern: 1995)

Cizek believed, as I do, that children are capable of making work which can be seen as art in its own right and not facsimiles of existing artists' works. As a member of staff and an artist in the classroom, teachers will often, but not always, undertake the role of facilitator, interestingly the phrase used by Slonims to describe the role of the artist in residence at the university. They are responsible for creating the space in which artwork gets made, whether by the students or themselves. They may devise a starting point, pose a question, introduce a material or set a challenge. The students, as the other artists involved, may respond (or sometimes not), answer questions, pose new ones, develop ideas, explore materials and so on. Of course this in turn generates another cycle of activity and so the development of 'stuff' continues. I see this activity, this teaching, as an artistic practice in its own right; literally, pedagogy as an artistic practice. By allowing and encouraging the students to see themselves as artists, we create a situation in which, potentially, we have a multitude of artists-in-residence at any given time. The understanding that their ideas are as valid as anyone else's and that the things they bring to the classroom, whether that be

literally, in the manner of objects they have created, or metaphorically, as in issues, ideas or questions, is vitally important.

My fundamental argument is for a different approach to teaching. In recognizing the practice as an artistic one we are able to approach the classroom in a new way, stripping back the artificial demarcations of knowledge and the restrictive subject silos.

Contemporary art is multi-faceted and complex. The growing acceptance of the contemporary artist as maker, researcher, anthropologist, documenter, sociologist, historian, philosopher and curator can, and must, include teacher. Art is distinct in that it is not focused on content and is a medium through which to develop an understanding of the other subjects. The creation of an environment in which this exploration is enabled is the role of the teacher. They operate as curators of performative educational experiences, at once instigator and participant. Lessons are performative participatory art. The question of contextualisation here is, undoubtedly, problematic but there is little doubt of the profound and important impact that teaching has on the practice of so many artists; from those that actively promote the symbiosis, such as Jef Geys, to those that vehemently deny it, such as John Baldessari. For 13 years I have explored art (teaching) as research. Experimenting with these approaches and investigating these questions.

I believe that teaching art is a transformative and subversive activity. It is about enabling questioning and questioning is about seeking new ways of doing things and subverting existing ones.

The teacher is an artist. Teaching is an artistic practice.

paragraph edited out

I am a teacher. I am an artist.

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